

No. 256

THE SECRET OF THE TALKING BIRD

A FOLKTALE FROM KARNATAKA

There are many who love to tell a story and many more who love to listen to one. And each time a story is retold, it acquires a new colour and a fresh dimension.

The grandmother who heard a story as a little girl from her grandmother, tells the same story to her grandchild but with a few embellishments of her own. The traveller from a distant land who happens to hear a story in the course of his travels, later tells it to his own people, modifying it to make it more dramatic or more acceptable to his audience. That is how stories which had first been told centuries ago have been kept alive and why we find recurring themes in the tales told in different regions separated by hundreds of miles.

This Amar Chitra Katha retells the folktale MATANADUVA GILI MATTU BEDARA HUDUGA, originally narrated in Kannada by Dr. Chandrashekar Kambar

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THE SECRET OF THE TALKING BIRD

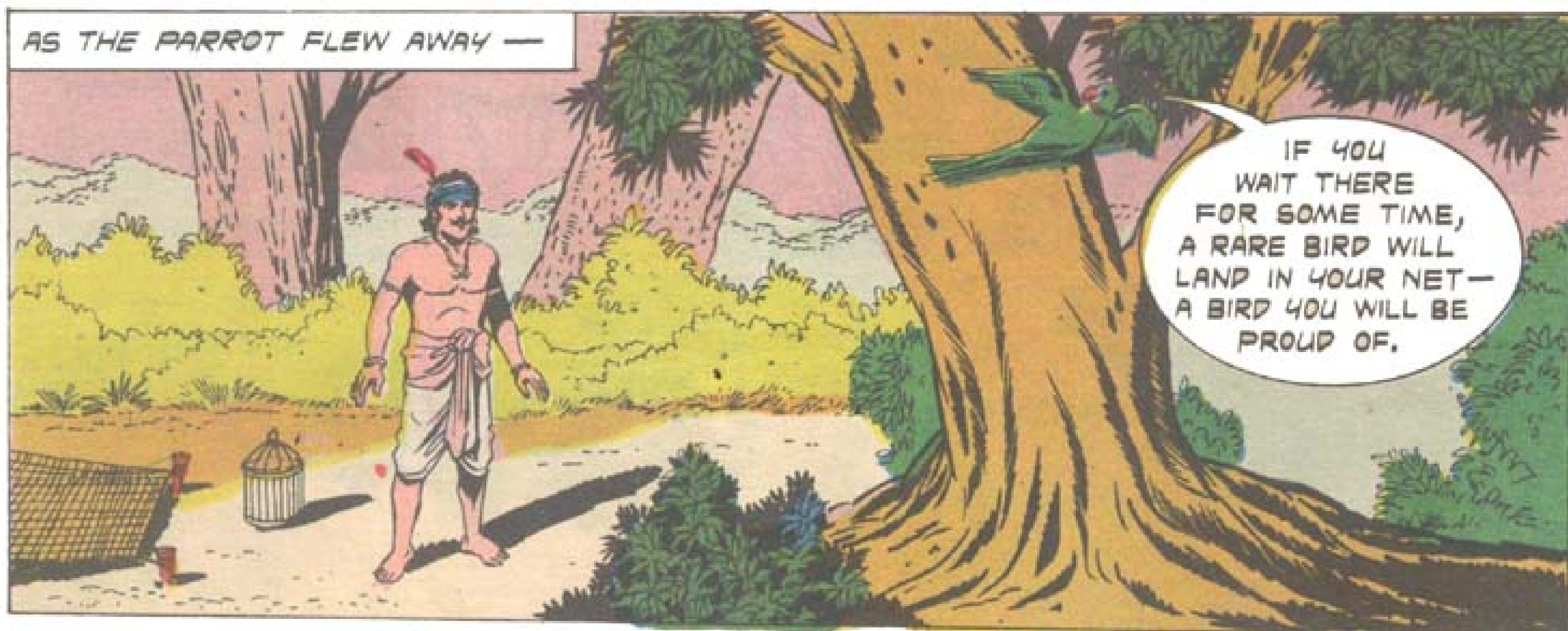
TIMMA, THE FOWLER, USED TO CATCH BIRDS AND SELL THEM FOR A LIVING.






YOU WILL MAKE YOUR FORTUNE IF YOU SET ME FREE.
I'D BE A FOOL TO FREE A BIRD THAT I'VE CAUGHT.


AND YET, I'LL SET YOU FREE.


AS THE PARROT FLEW AWAY —
IF YOU WAIT THERE FOR SOME TIME, A RARE BIRD WILL LAND IN YOUR NET— A BIRD YOU WILL BE PROUD OF.


TIMMA TOOK THE PARROT'S ADVICE AND WAITED FOR ANOTHER BIRD TO COME HIS WAY. A SHORT WHILE LATER—


A PARROT AGAIN! AND WHAT A COLOURFUL ONE!


IT HAS LANDED ON THE NET!


THIS IS A PARROT THE KING WOULD LOVE TO HAVE.


BUT WHEN TIMMA TOOK THE PARROT TO THE PALACE, HE WAS STOPPED BY THE MINISTER.
THE MAHARAJ WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SEE YOU. HE IS BUSY.


WHEN WILL HE BE FREE, SIR?
NEVER! AT LEAST NOT FOR ANY AND EVERY FOWLER WHO COMES HERE WITH A PARROT.


THE RIGHT PLACE TO TAKE YOUR BIRD IS THE MARKET...
BUT, SIR, THIS IS A RARE PARROT...


A RARE PARROT? LET ME HAVE A LOOK AT IT.

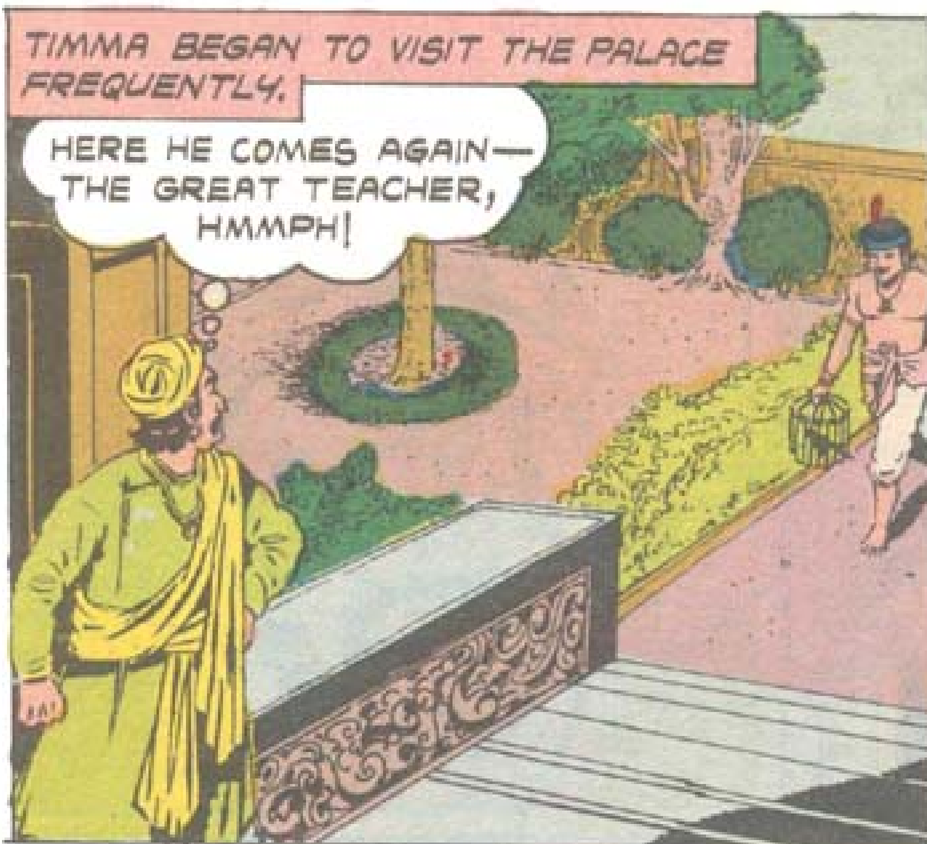

IT HAS FIVE COLOURS! I HAVE HEARD ABOUT SUCH A BIRD BUT I HAD NEVER SEEN ONE.
IT'S FOR YOU, MAHARAJ.


I'LL ACCEPT IT ON ONE CONDITION...


...YOU MUST TEACH IT TO SPEAK.
IT WOULD BE A PLEASURE, MAHARAJ.

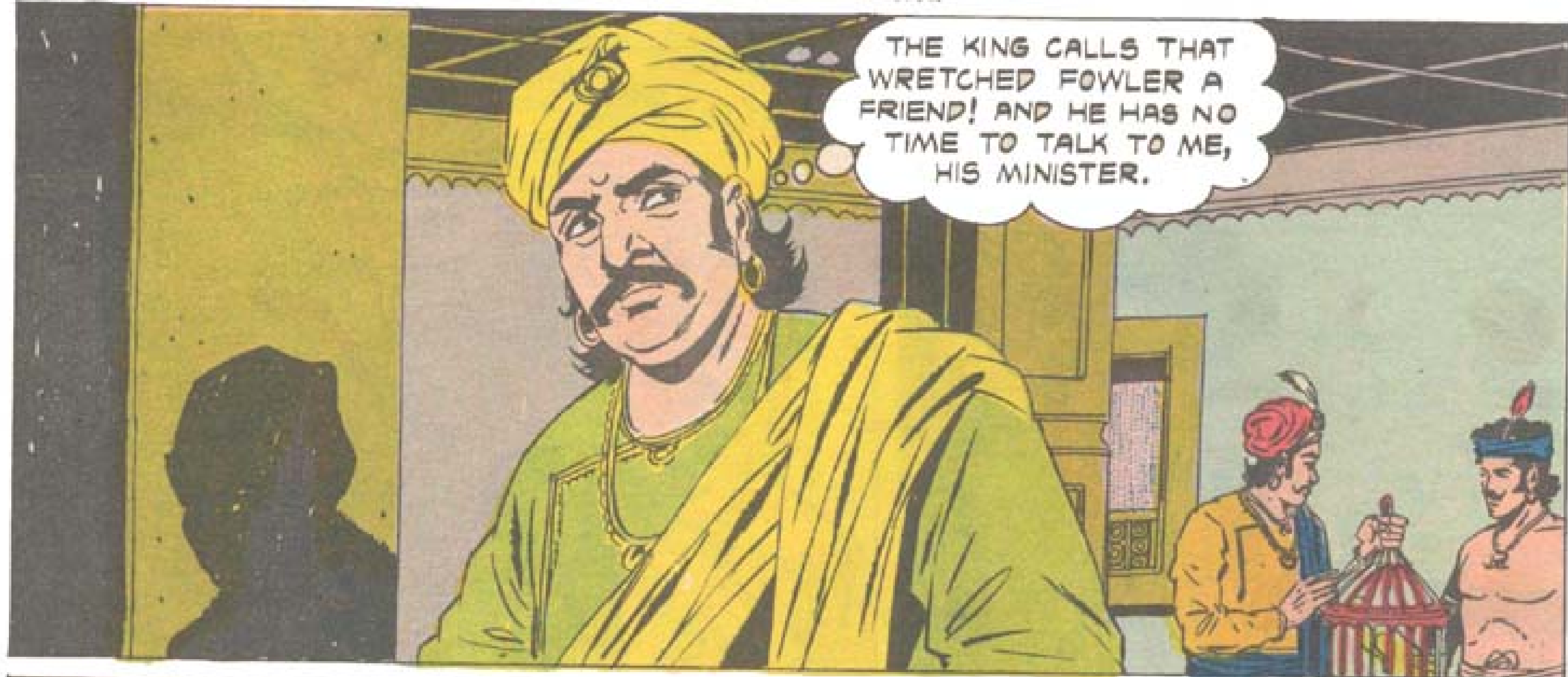

MY MINISTER WILL GIVE YOU A BAG OF GOLD COINS.
WHAT! A BAG OF GOLD COINS FOR A PARROT?


AND YOU MAY VISIT THE PALACE ANY TIME YOU LIKE.
THANK YOU, MAHARAJ.

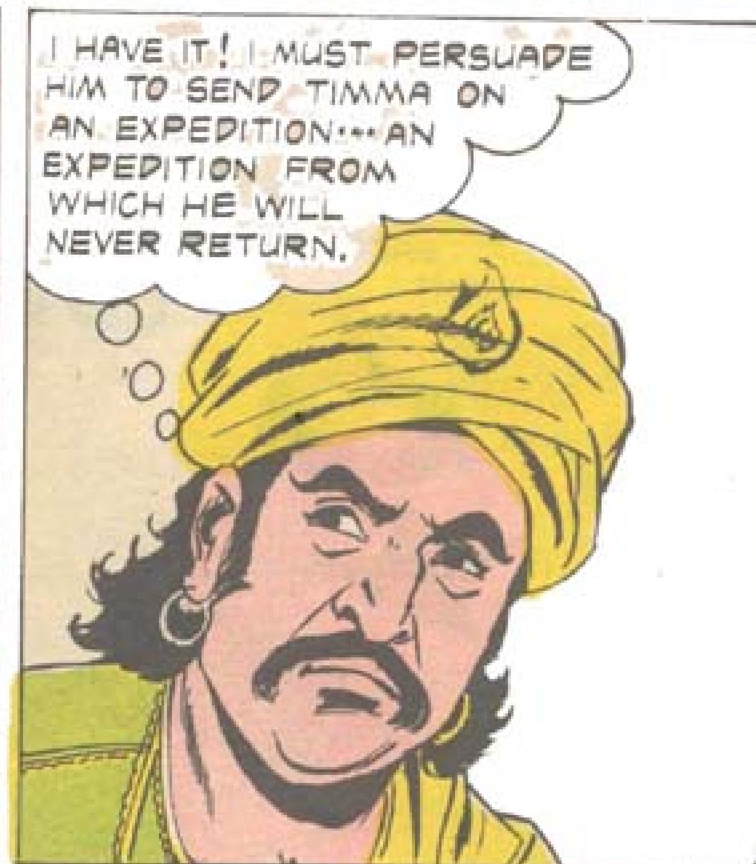

TIMMA BEGAN TO VISIT THE PALACE FREQUENTLY.
HERE HE COMES AGAIN— THE GREAT TEACHER, HMMPH!

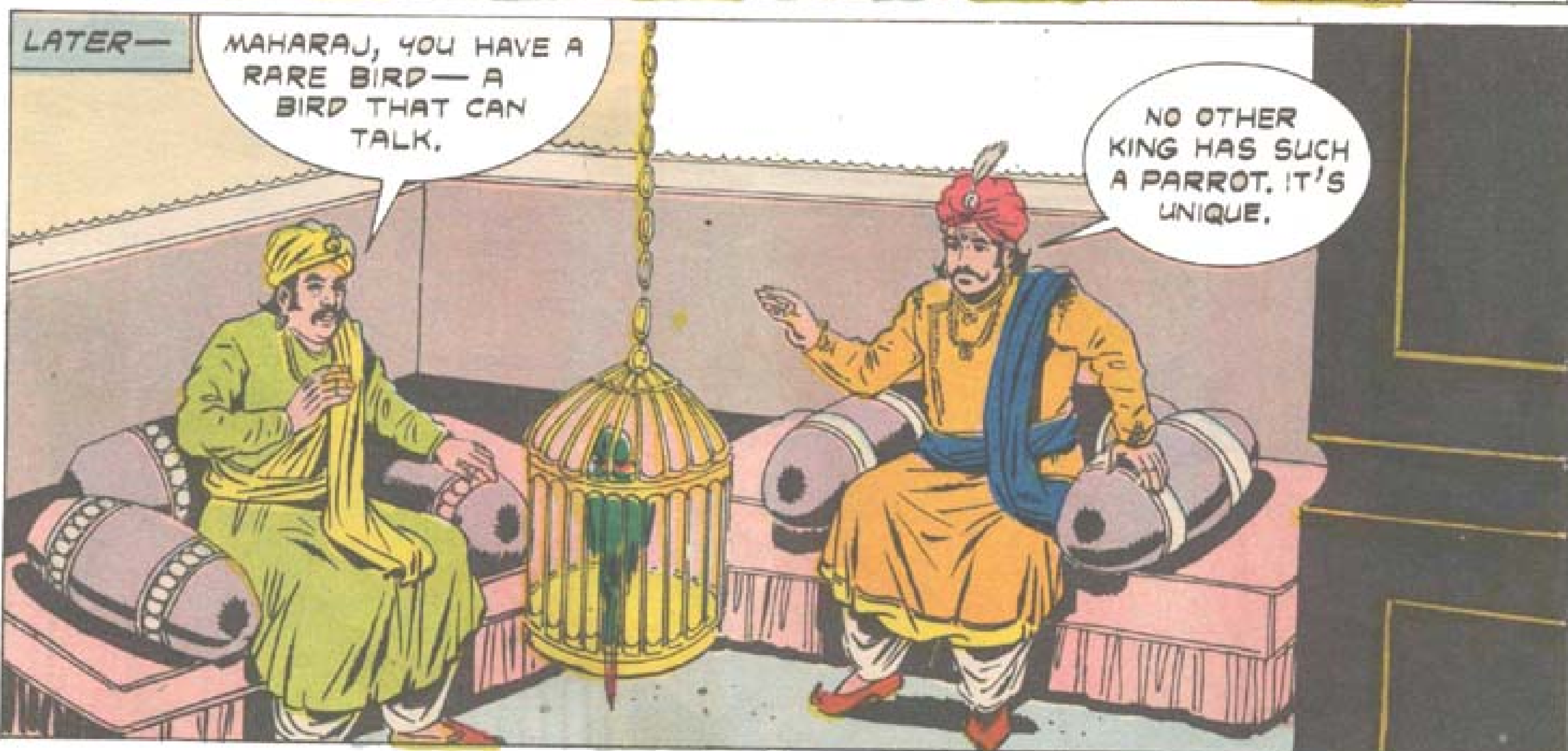

SOON TIMMA HAD GOOD NEWS FOR THE KING.
THE PARROT HAS BEGUN TO TALK, MAHARAJ.
MARVELLOUS!


WHEN THE MINISTER WANTED TO SPEAK TO THE KING —
MAHARAJ...
NOT NOW, PLEASE. CAN'T YOU SEE I AM BUSY WITH MY FRIEND?


THE KING CALLS THAT WRETCHED FOWLER A FRIEND! AND HE HAS NO TIME TO TALK TO ME, HIS MINISTER.

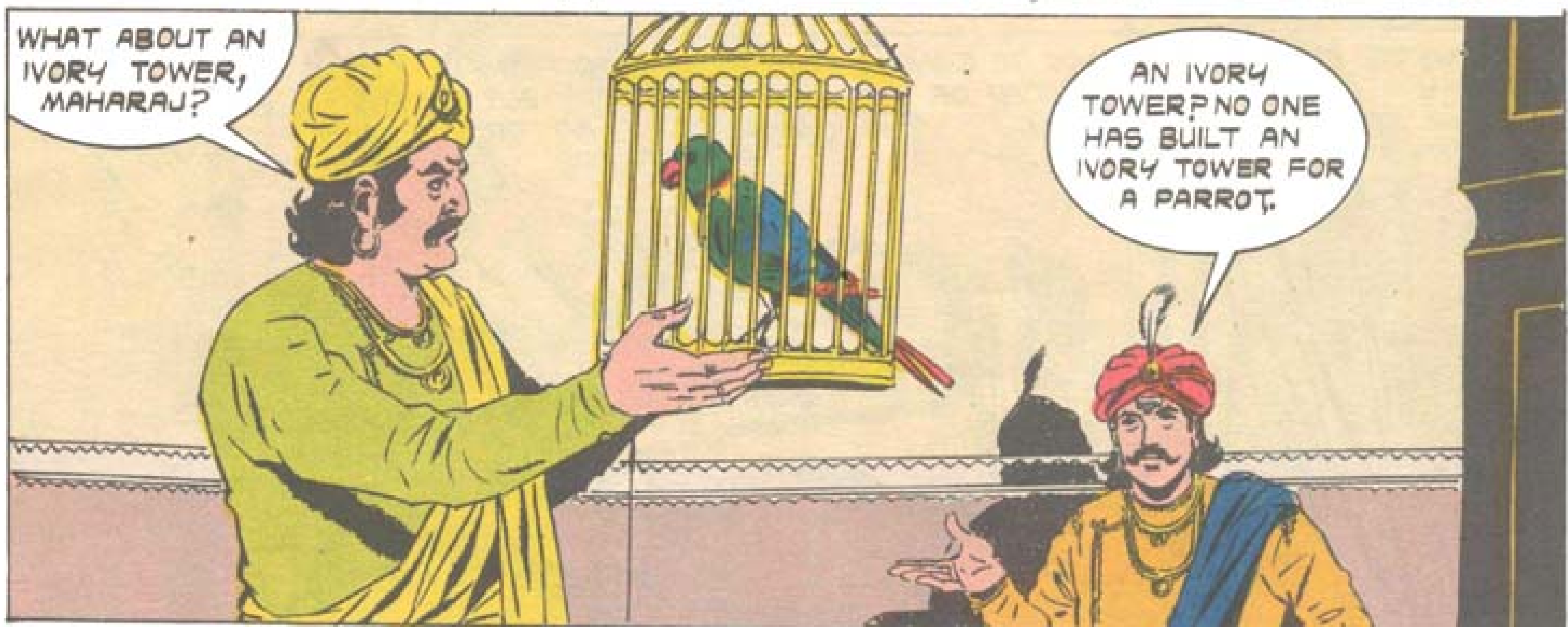

KINGS SHOULD NOT MIX WITH COMMONERS. BUT I DARE NOT ADVISE HIM TO STOP MEETING THE FOWLER.

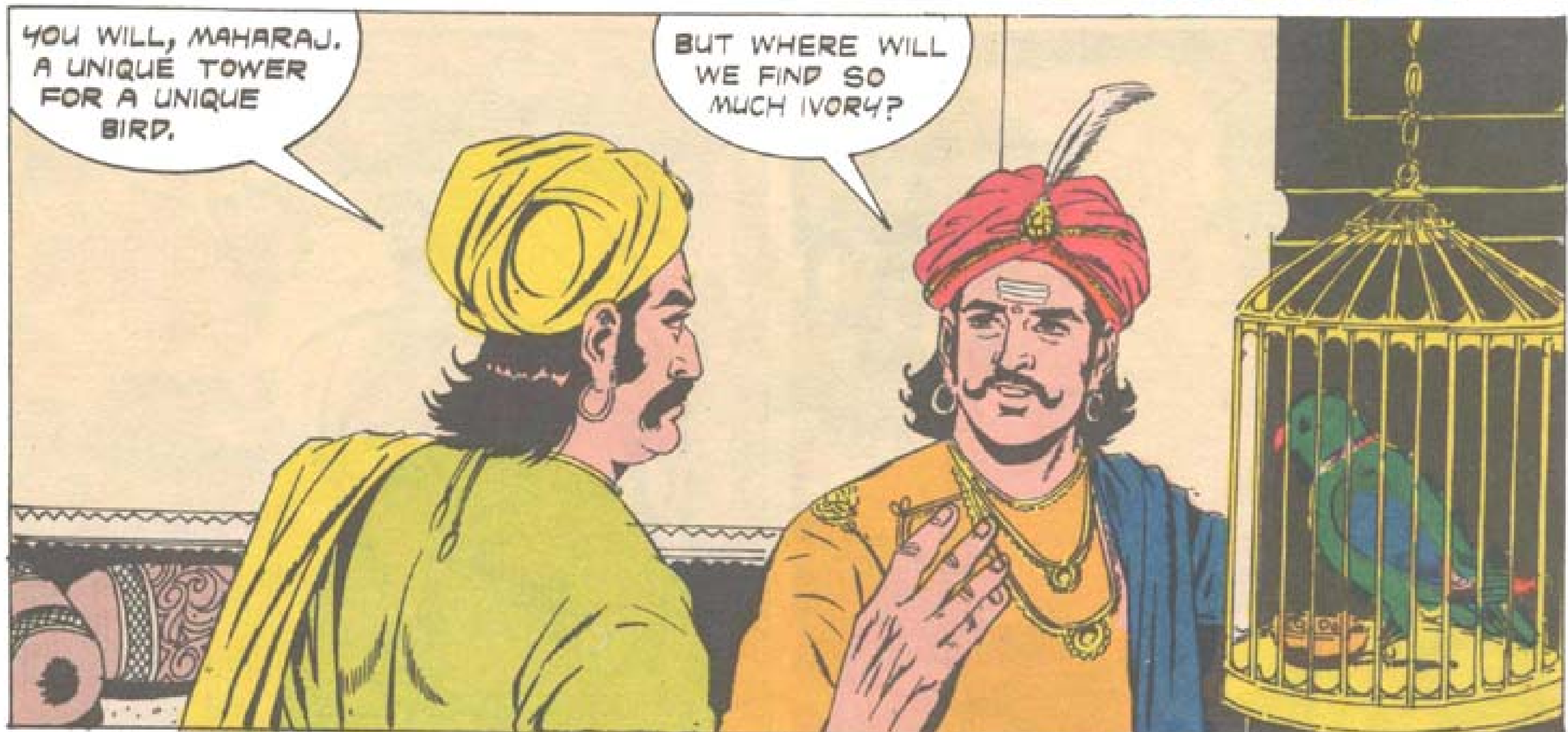

I HAVE IT! I MUST PERSUADE HIM TO SEND TIMMA ON AN EXPEDITION... AN EXPEDITION FROM WHICH HE WILL NEVER RETURN.

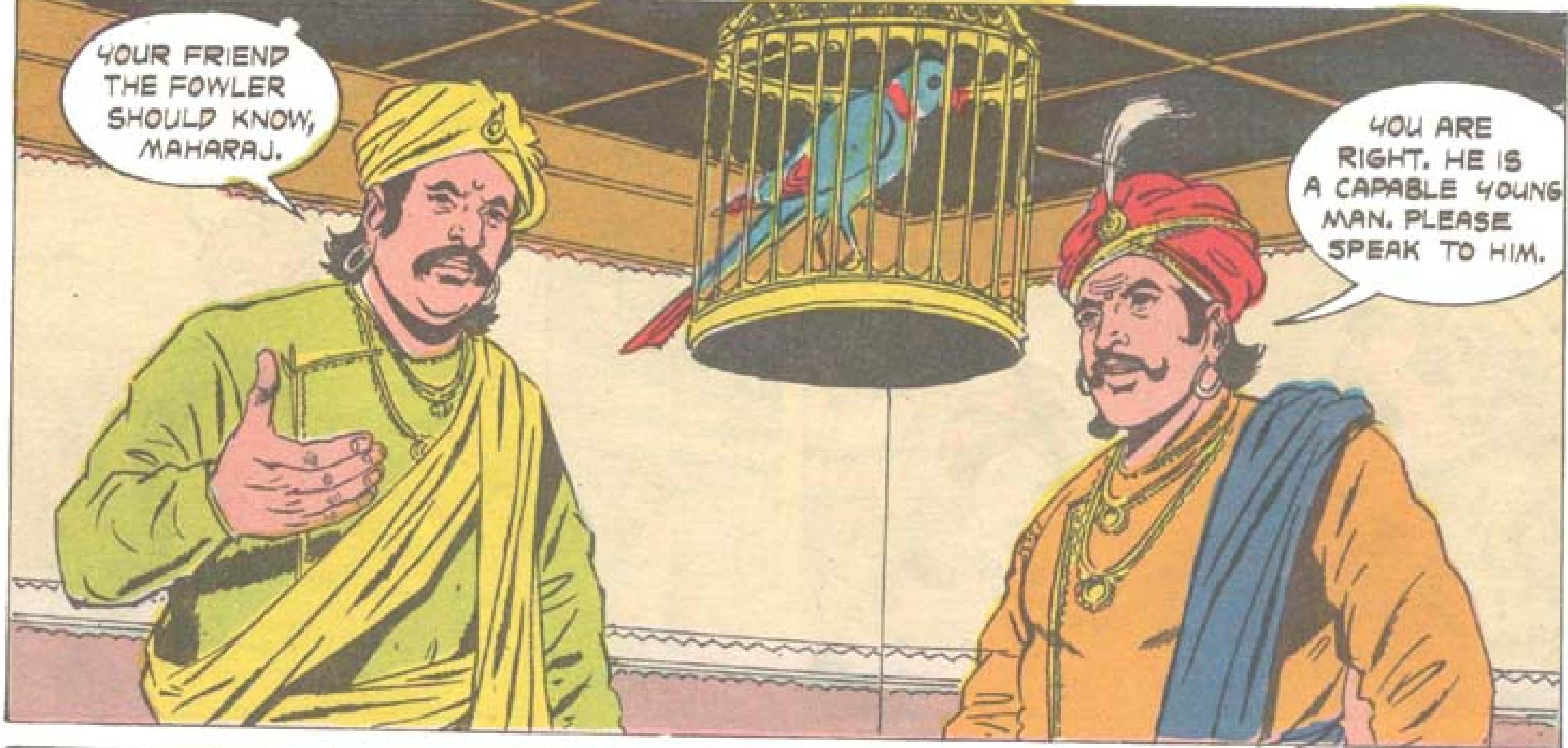

LATER—
MAHARAJ, YOU HAVE A RARE BIRD— A BIRD THAT CAN TALK.
NO OTHER KING HAS SUCH A PARROT. IT'S UNIQUE.

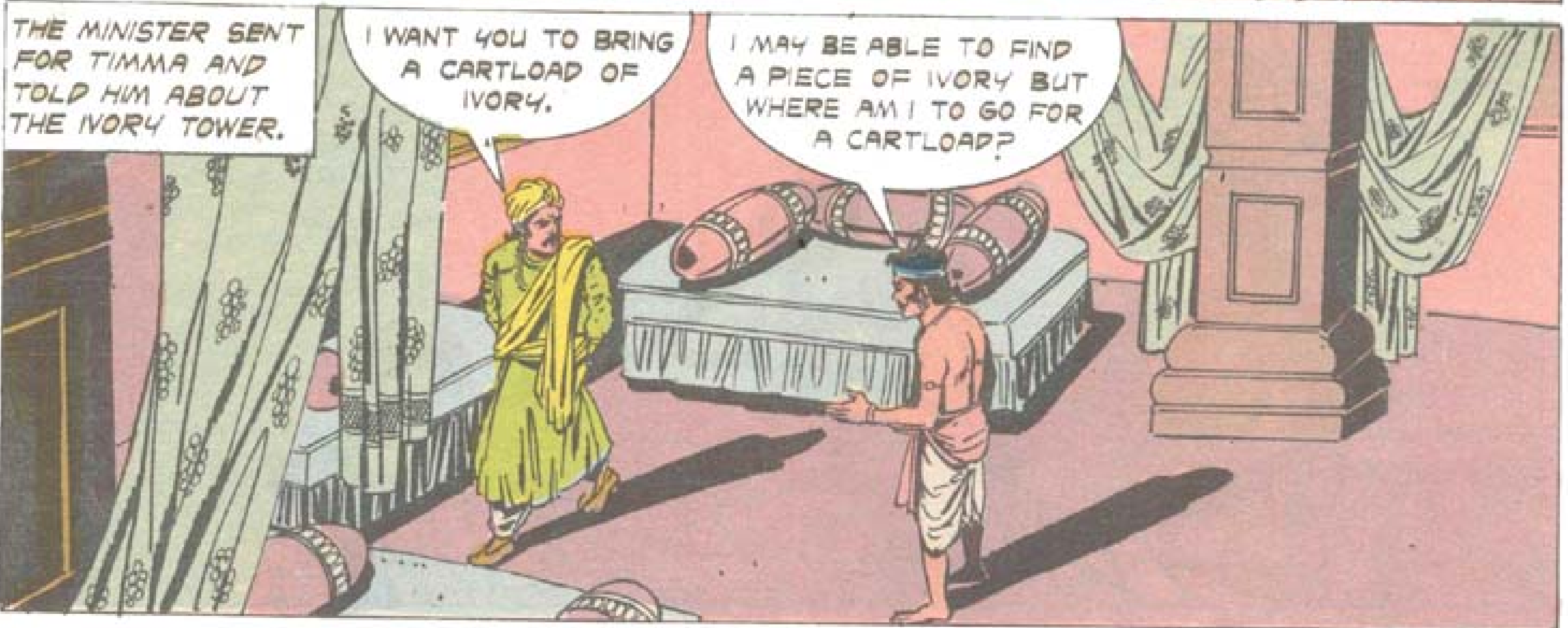

UNIQUE BIRD, YES. BUT IN SUCH AN ORDINARY CAGE!
WHAT!


I'M SORRY, MAHARAJ. BUT I HAVE TO SPEAK THE TRUTH. A GOLDEN CAGE IS VERY COMMON.
THAT'S THE BEST ONE CAN GET.

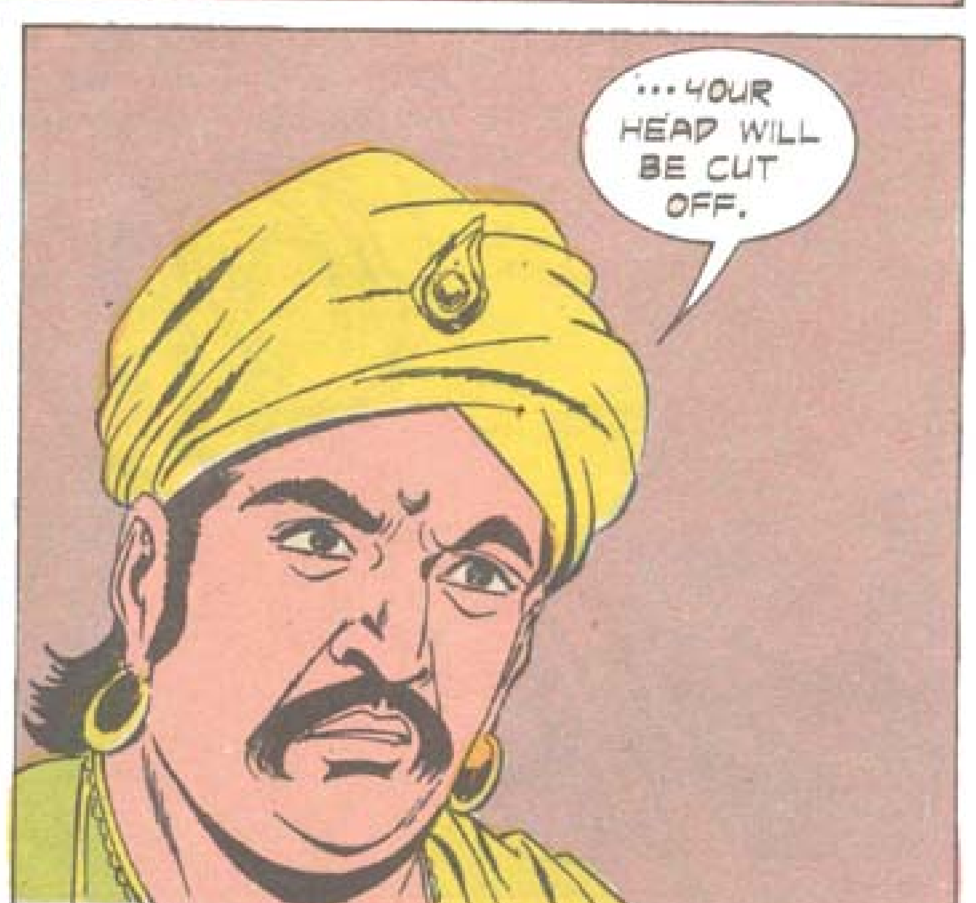

WHAT ABOUT AN IVORY TOWER, MAHARAJ?
AN IVORY TOWER? NO ONE HAS BUILT AN IVORY TOWER FOR A PARROT.


YOU WILL, MAHARAJ. A UNIQUE TOWER FOR A UNIQUE BIRD.
BUT WHERE WILL WE FIND SO MUCH IVORY?


YOUR FRIEND THE FOWLER SHOULD KNOW, MAHARAJ.
YOU ARE RIGHT. HE IS A CAPABLE YOUNG MAN. PLEASE SPEAK TO HIM.


THE MINISTER SENT FOR TIMMA AND TOLD HIM ABOUT THE IVORY TOWER.
I WANT YOU TO BRING A CARTLOAD OF IVORY.
I MAY BE ABLE TO FIND A PIECE OF IVORY BUT WHERE AM I TO GO FOR A CARTLOAD?


I WILL GIVE YOU FOUR WEEKS' TIME, IF YOU FAIL TO BRING IT...


...YOUR HEAD WILL BE CUT OFF.

SO POOR TIMMA WENT TO THE FOREST IN SEARCH OF IVORY.

TO GET THE IVORY, I'LL HAVE TO CAPTURE ELEPHANTS. BUT HOW DOES ONE TRAP ELEPHANTS? I ONLY KNOW HOW TO TRAP BIRDS.

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING SO WORRIED, FRIEND?

?

YOU!

YES, YOUR OLD FRIEND. IS THERE ANYTHING I COULD DO FOR YOU?

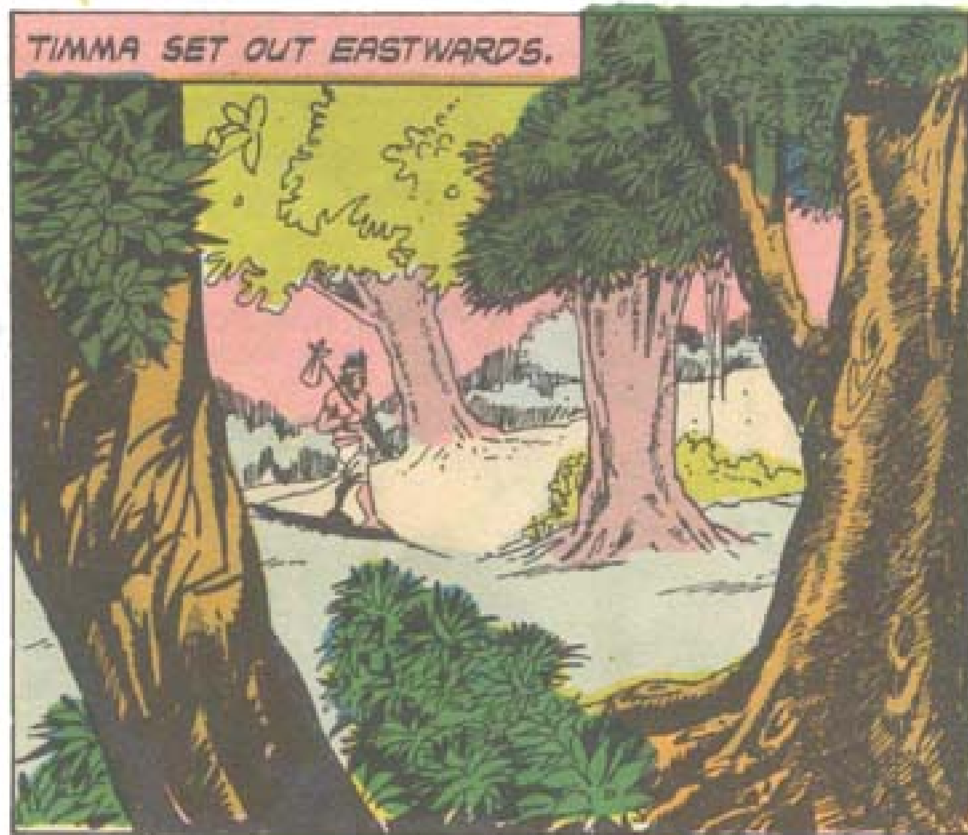
TIMMA TOLD THE BIRD ALL ABOUT THE TOWER OF IVORY.

I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND ALL THE IVORY THE KING WANTS AND THE KING WILL PUT ME TO DEATH.

DON'T DESPAIR, MY FRIEND.

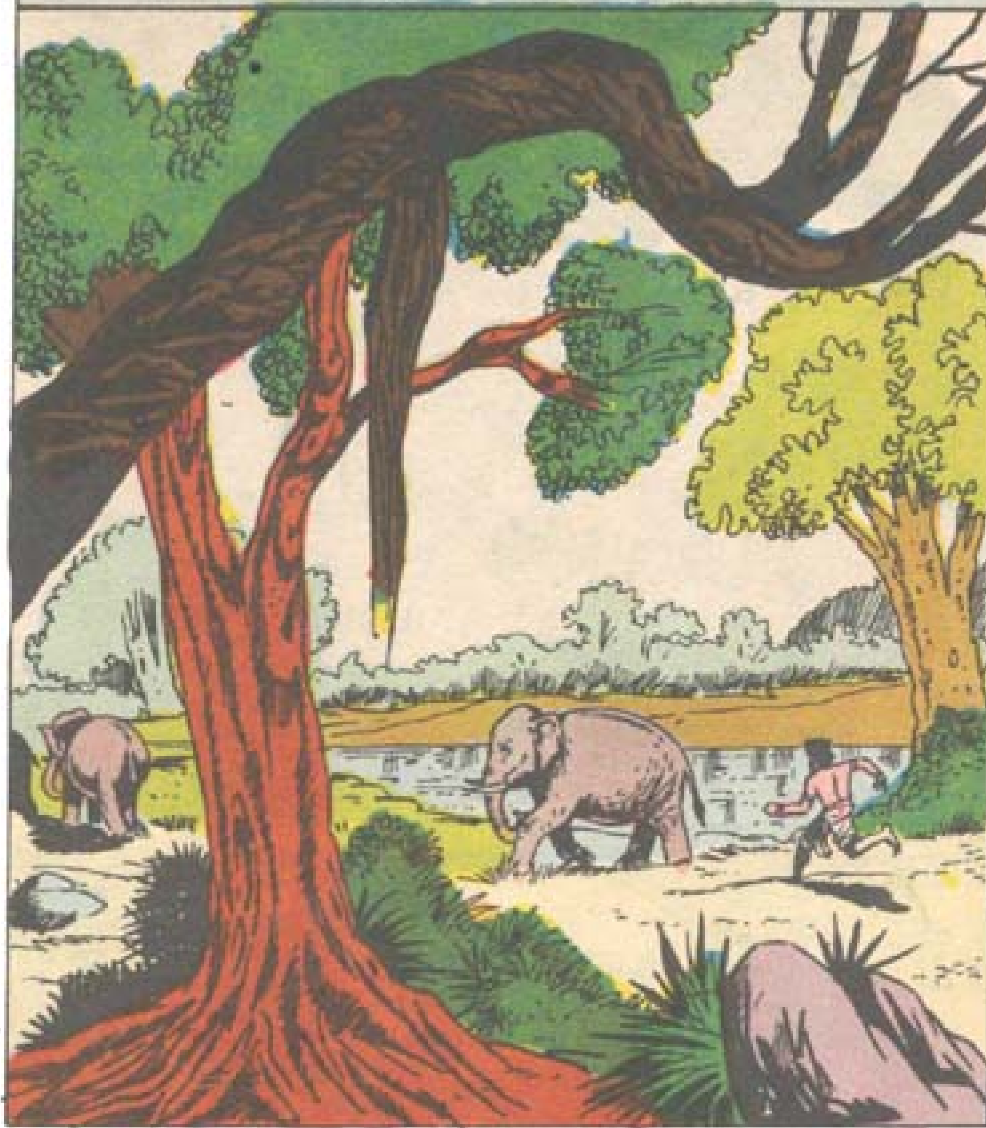
GO EASTWARDS. YOU WILL COME ACROSS A FOREST. WALK THROUGH IT TILL YOU REACH A TANK. ALL THE ELEPHANTS OF THE FOREST COME THERE TO DRINK WATER.


SPEAK TO THE KING ELEPHANT. HE WILL HELP YOU.


TIMMA SET OUT EASTWARDS.

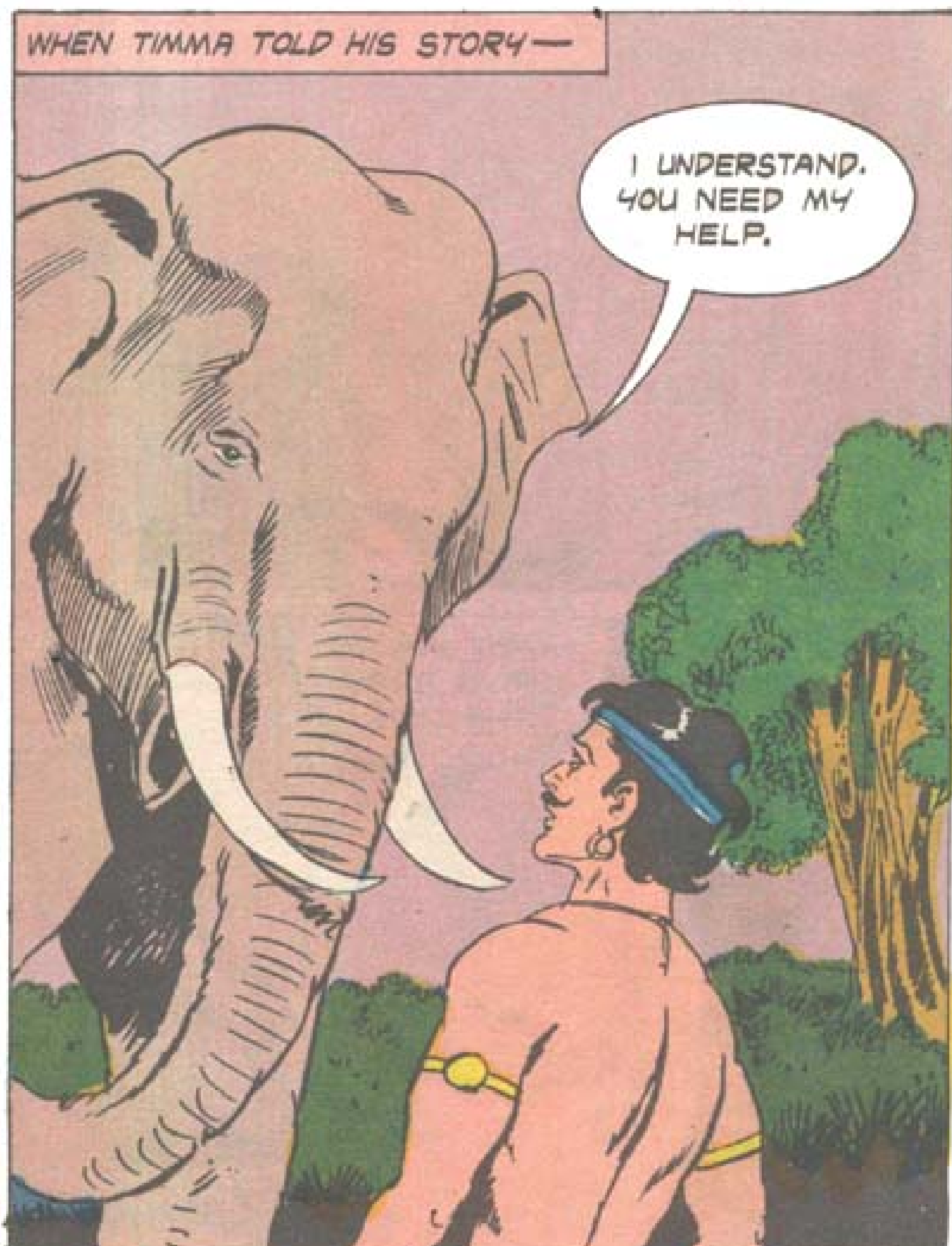

TOWARDS NOON HE CAME UPON THE TANK. HE COULD SEE THE ELEPHANTS FROLICKING IN THE WATER.

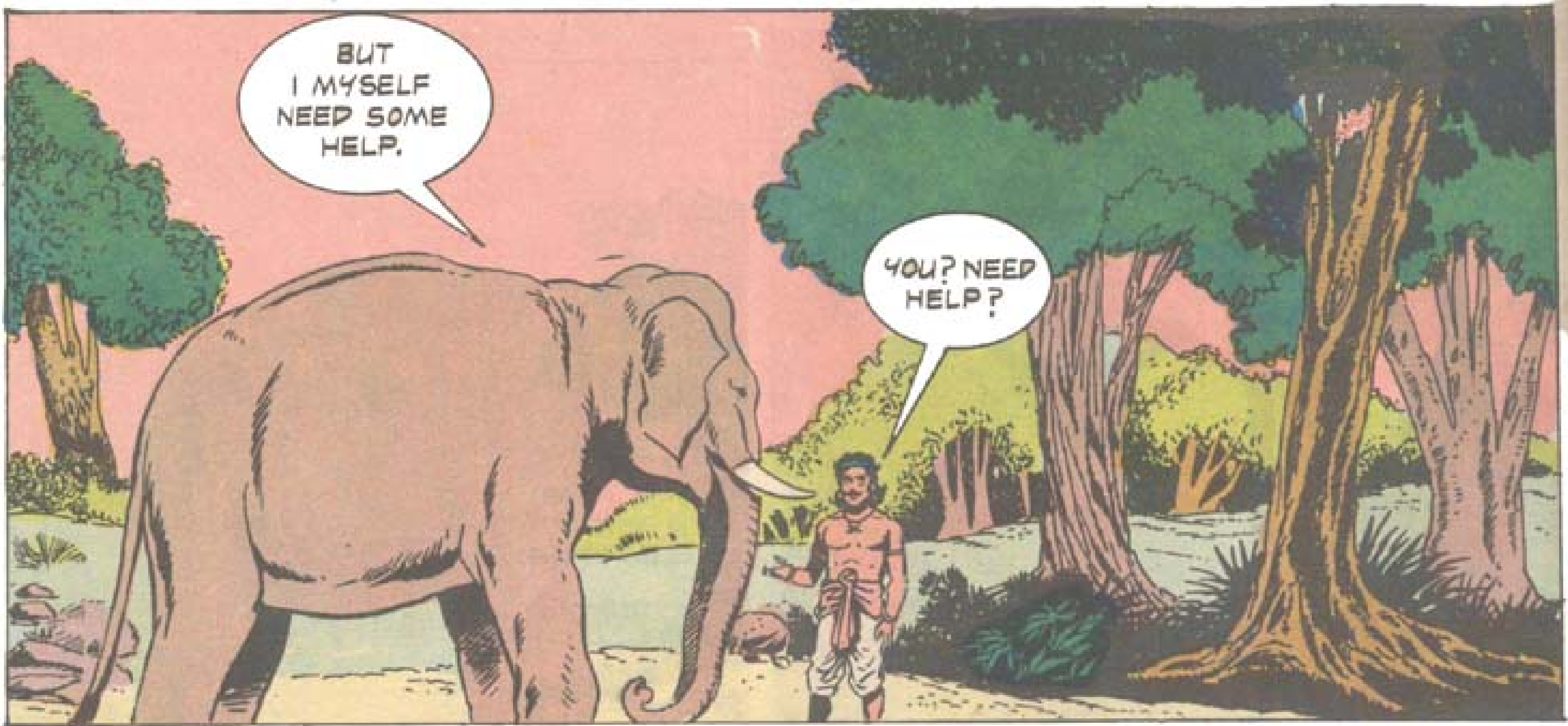

IN THE EVENING AS THE ELEPHANTS LEFT THE TANK—
THAT OLD ONE MUST BE THEIR KING.


TIMMA RAN UP TO THE OLD ELEPHANT...


...AND FELL AT HIS FEET.
HELP ME, O KING OF ELEPHANTS.


STAND UP, CHILD. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?


WHEN TIMMA TOLD HIS STORY—
I UNDERSTAND. YOU NEED MY HELP.


BUT I MYSELF NEED SOME HELP.
YOU? NEED HELP?


YES, I NEED HELP. YOU HUMANS ARE CLEVER. I AM SURE YOU COULD HELP ME.


WE ELEPHANTS ARE BEING HARASSED BY A WICKED LION...


I WANT YOU TO DRIVE AWAY THE LION.
YOU WANT ME TO... TO...

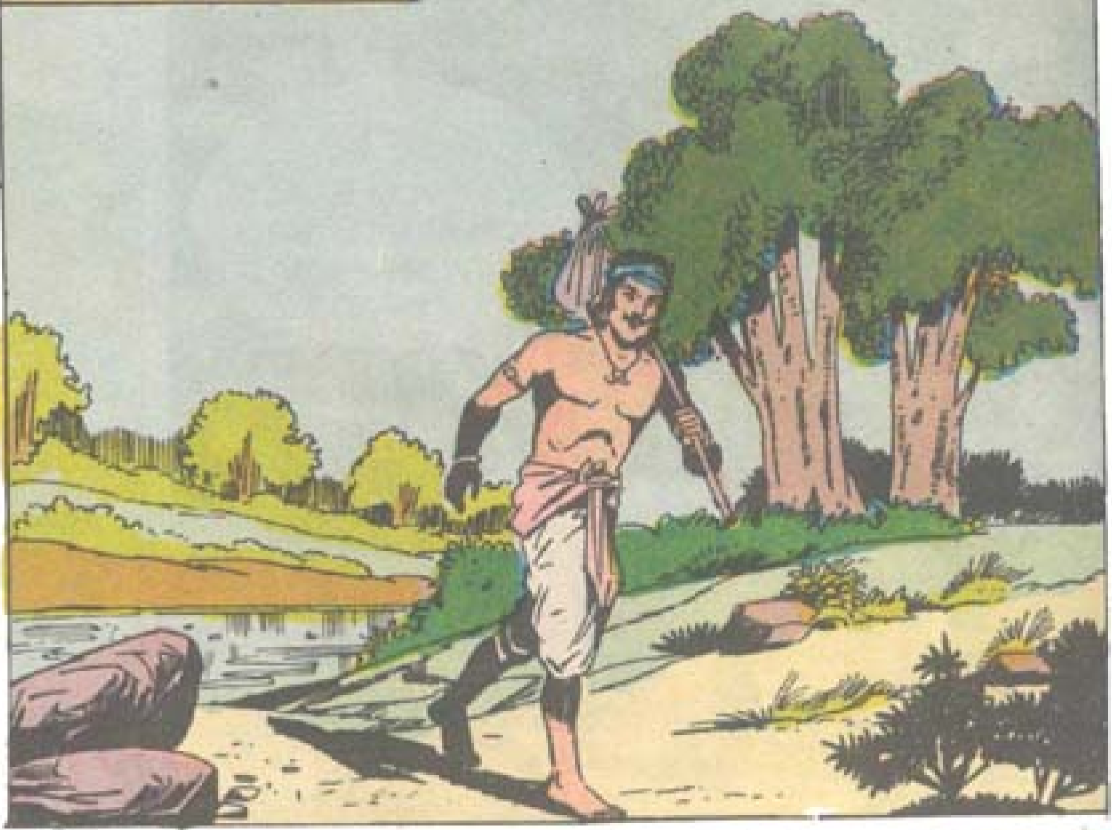

DO IT AND YOU SHALL HAVE ALL THE IVORY YOU WANT.

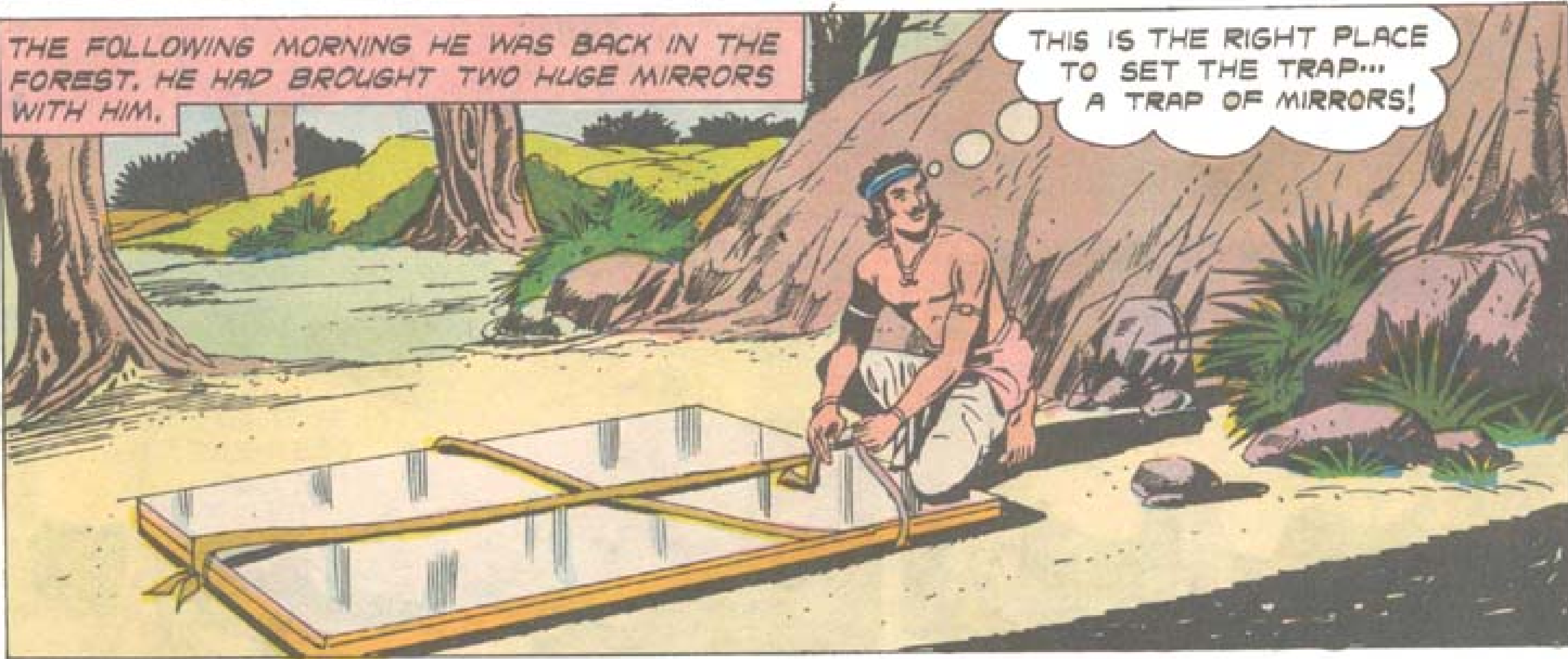

THE ELEPHANT LEFT, BUT TIMMA STOOD WHERE HE WAS.
HOW CAN I TACKLE A LION? I AM A POOR FOWLER, NOT A BIG GAME HUNTER.


WELL, I'LL FIRST DRINK SOME WATER AND THEN SIT DOWN TO THINK.


AS HE BENT DOWN TO TAKE THE WATER IN HIS PALMS—
WHAT DO I SEE HERE? I'VE GOT IT!


I DON'T HAVE TO BE A BIG GAME HUNTER TO HANDLE THAT LION.


TIMMA QUICKLY QUENCHED HIS THIRST AND THEN SET OUT FOR HIS CITY.


THE FOLLOWING MORNING HE WAS BACK IN THE FOREST. HE HAD BROUGHT TWO HUGE MIRRORS WITH HIM.
THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE TO SET THE TRAP... A TRAP OF MIRRORS!


TIMMA PLACED THE MIRRORS OPPOSITE EACH OTHER.
HAH! NOW I AM READY TO RECEIVE THE KING OF THE JUNGLE.

FEELING ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENT, HE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN TO SING.

TARA LA...LA... LA.

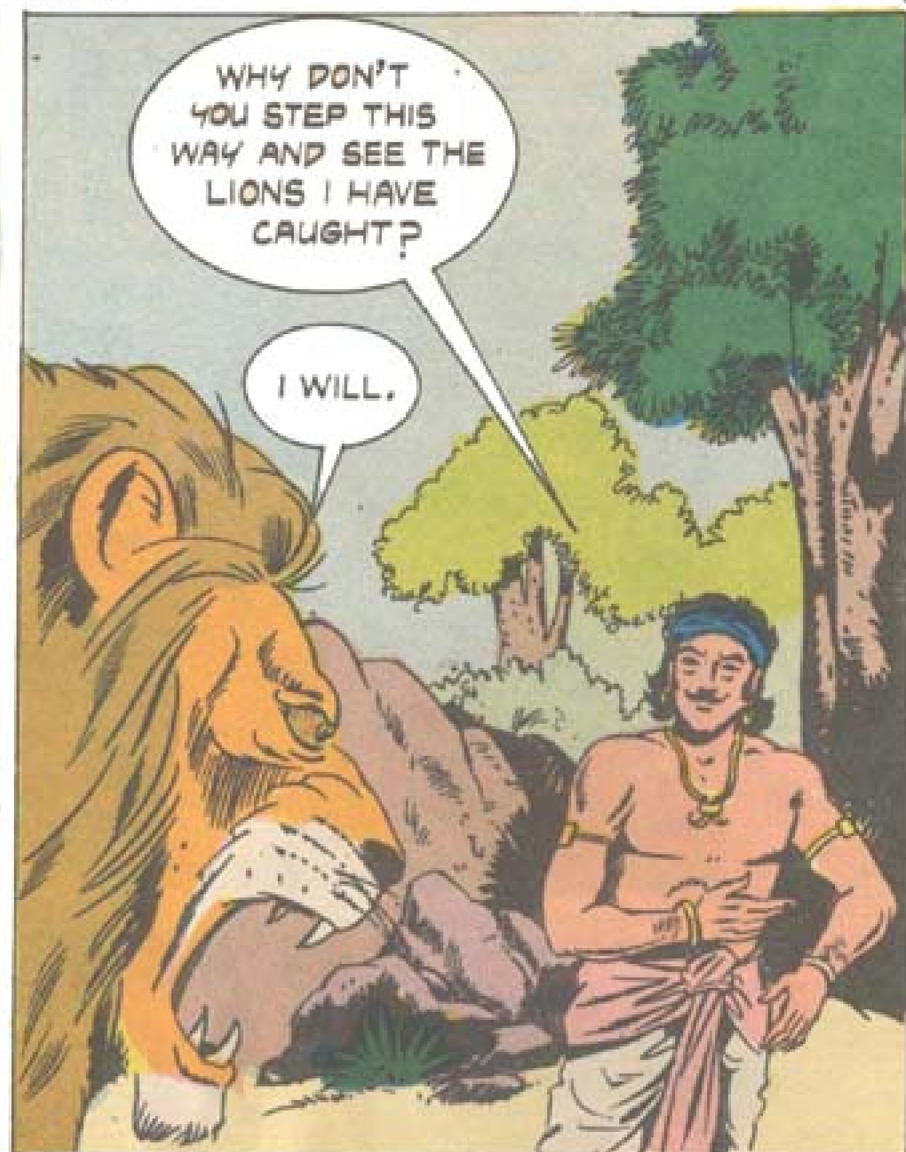
SOON HE HAD COMPANY.

G-R-R-R!

YOUNG MAN, EVEN VETERAN GAME HUNTERS RUN AWAY WHEN THEY SEE ME. AREN'T YOU SCARED?

SCARED? WHO, ME? HAH! DO YOU KNOW TO WHOM YOU ARE TALKING?


I AM A BIG GAME HUNTER— A HUNTER OF LIONS.
YOU LIAR, DO YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THAT BLUFF?


WHY DON'T YOU STEP THIS WAY AND SEE THE LIONS I HAVE CAUGHT?
I WILL.


AS THE LION LEAPT TOWARDS HIM...


...TIMMA DEFTLY STEPPED ASIDE...

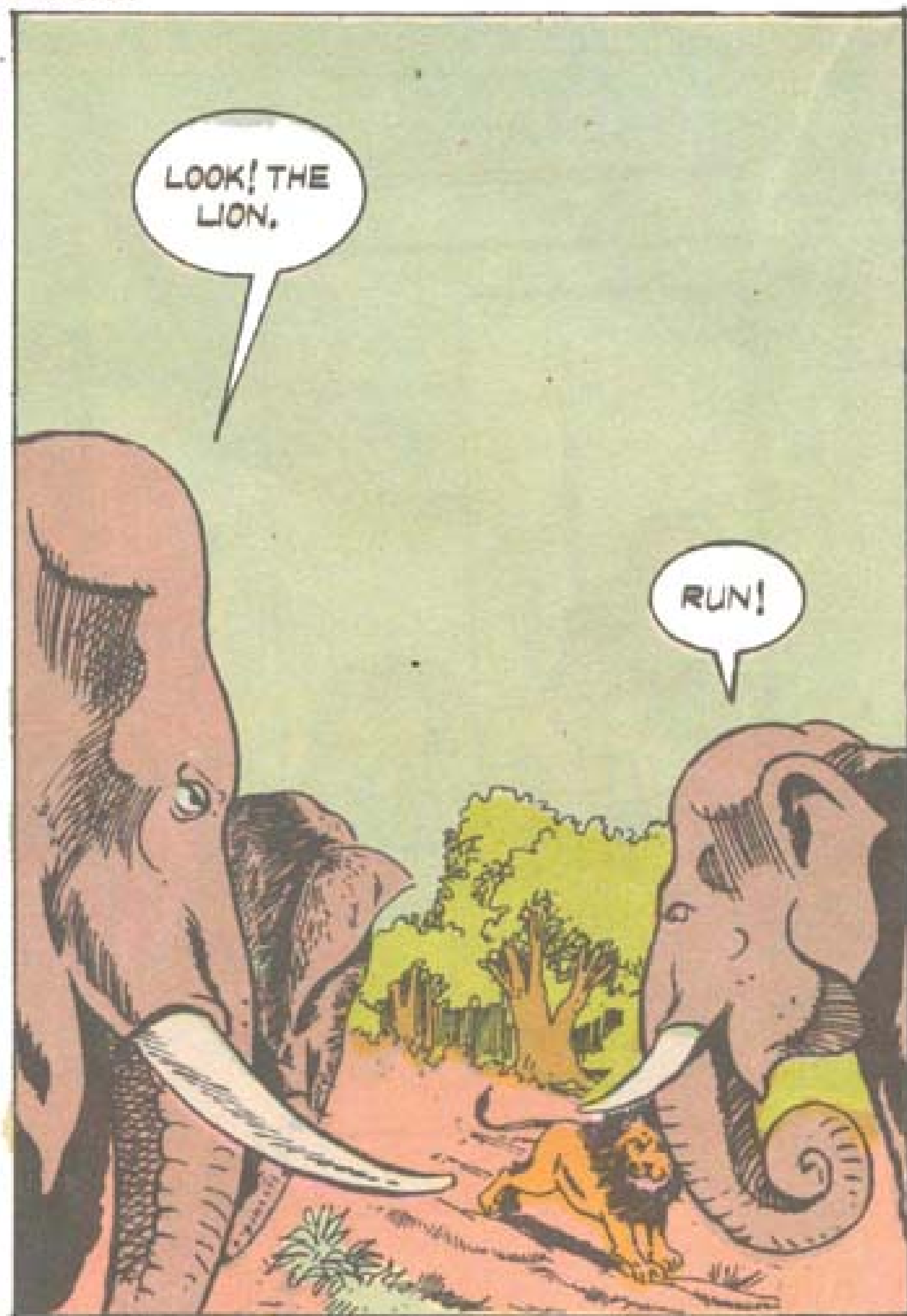
...AND THE BEAST STOOD FACING THE MIRRORS.

?!!







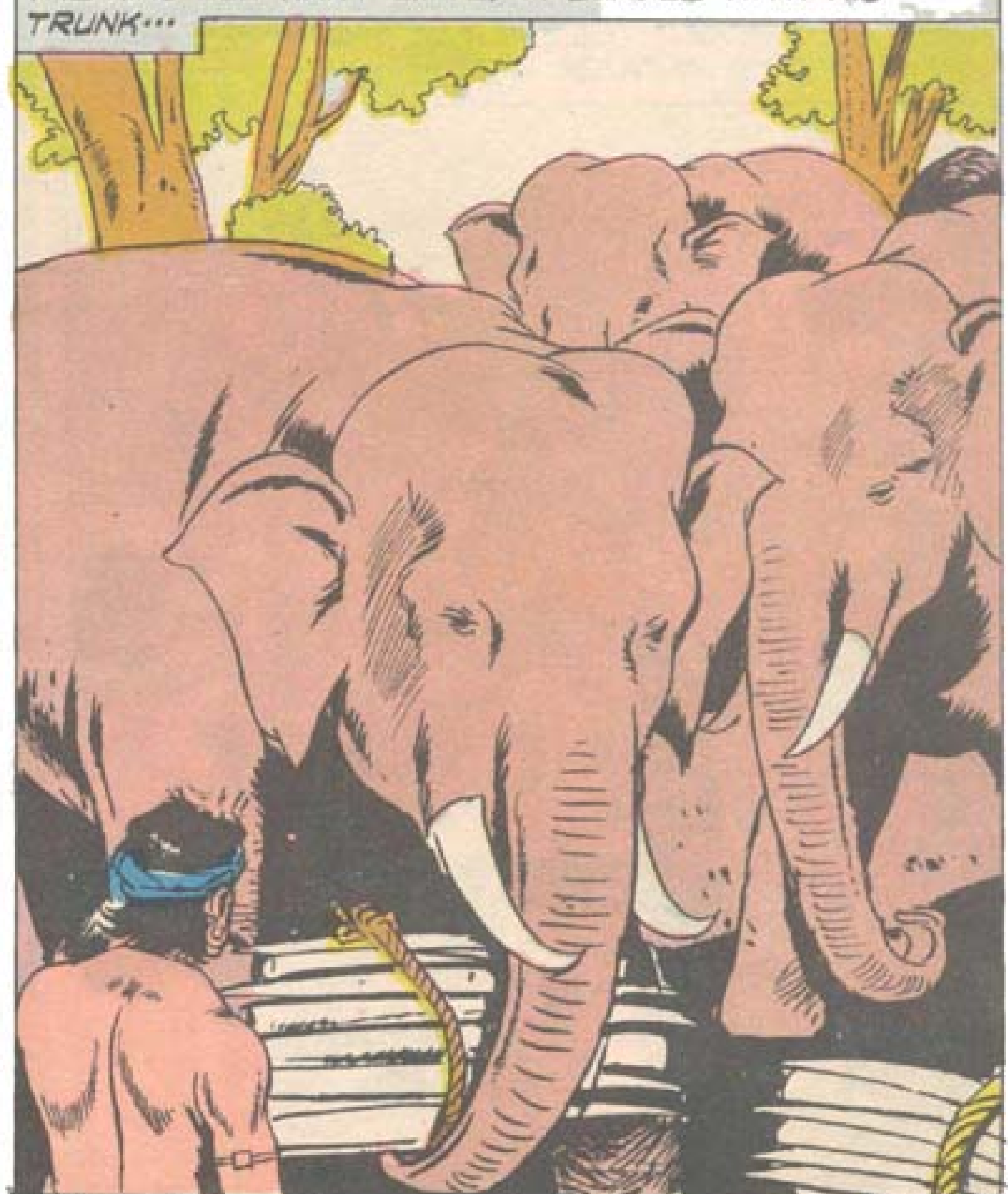


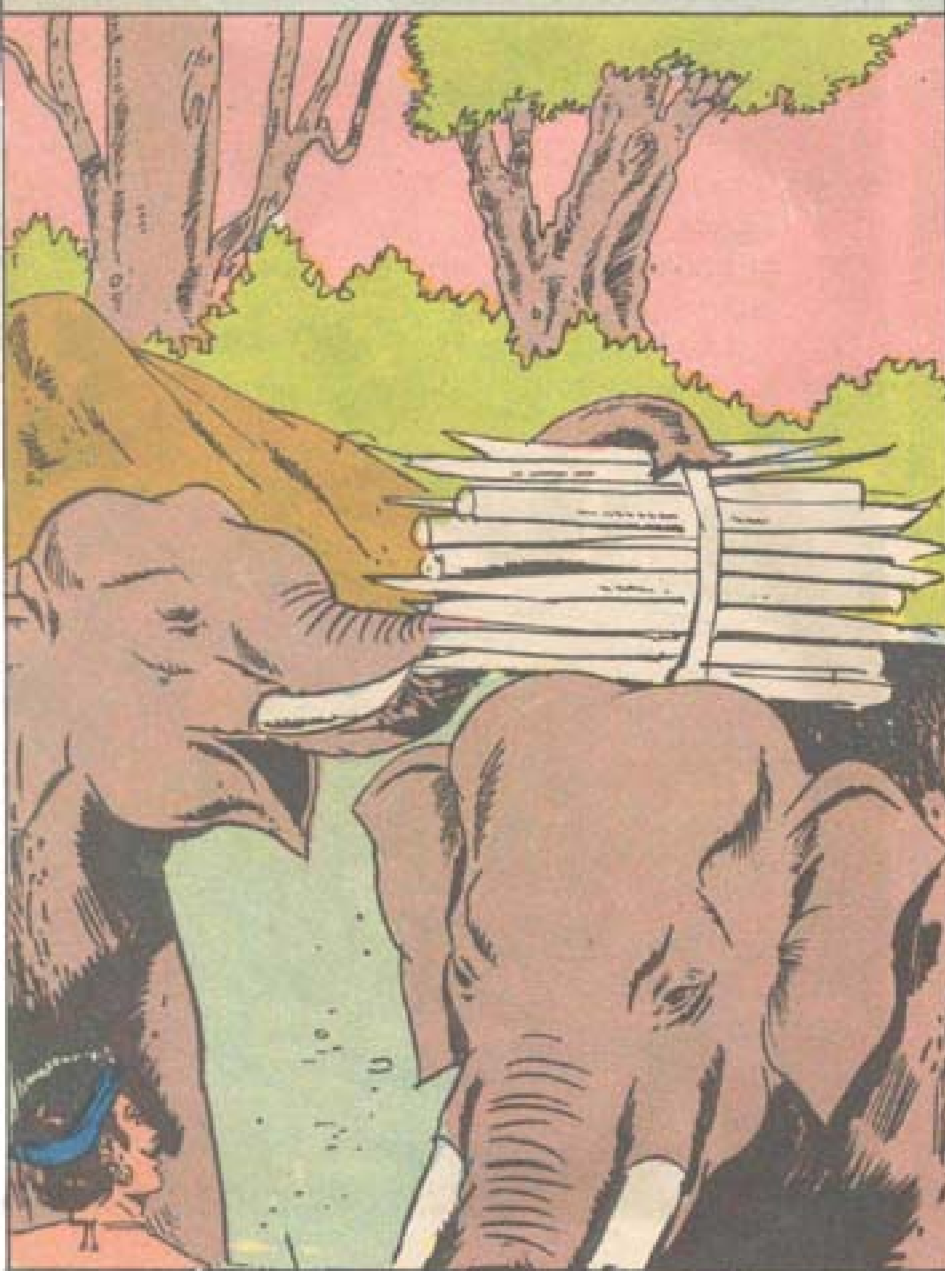
EVEN AS THE ELEPHANTS MADE WAY, THE LION SPED BY...

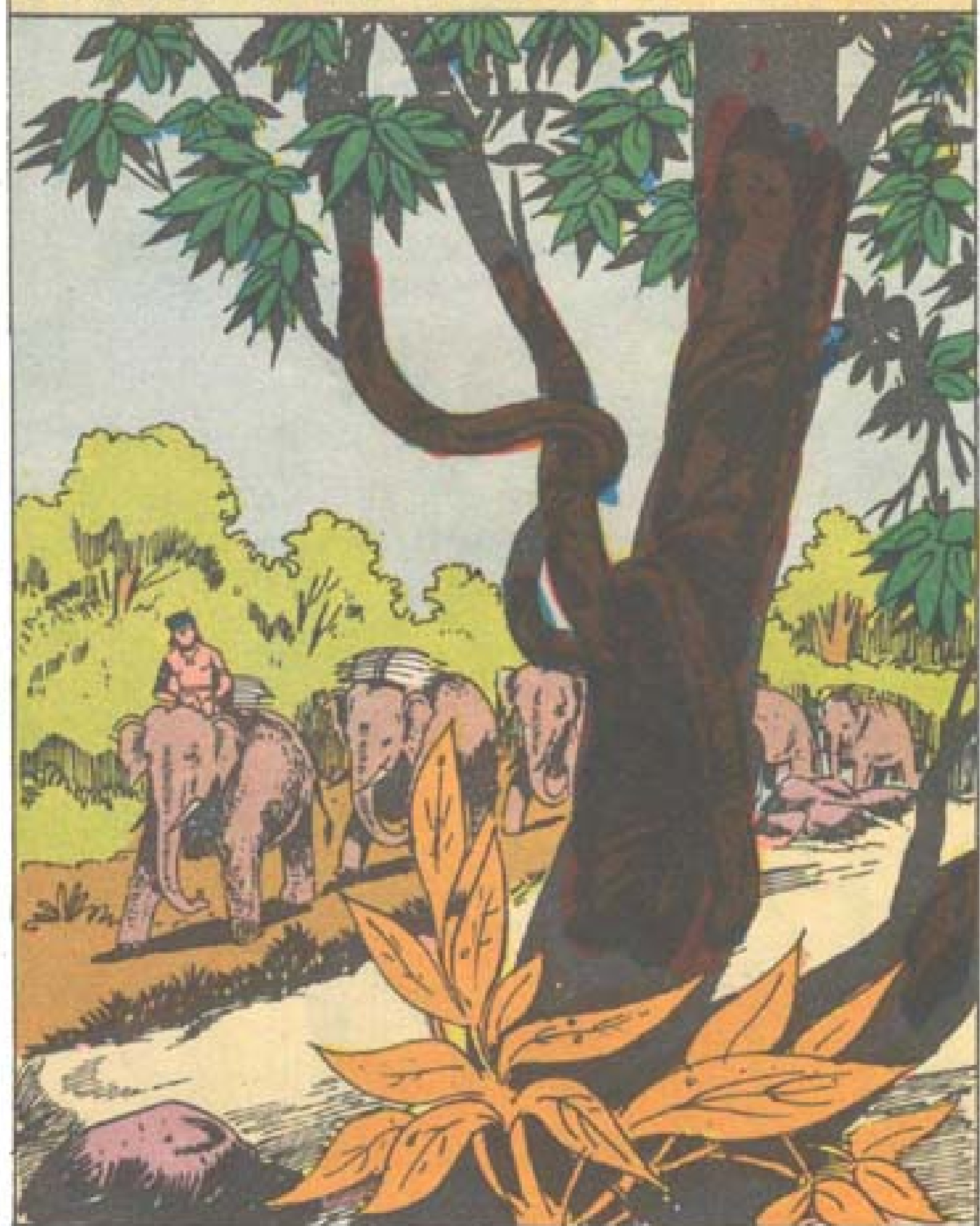

...AND DISAPPEARED.
NEVER AGAIN WILL HE BE SEEN IN THIS FOREST.
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND. AND NOW I SHALL KEEP MY PART OF THE BARGAIN. COME WITH ME.


THE KING ELEPHANT TOOK TIMMA TO A CAVE.
LOOK, THOSE ARE THE SKELETONS OF ELEPHANTS KILLED BY THE LION. YOU MAY TAKE ALL THE TUSKS.


TIMMA TIED THE TUSKS INTO HUGE BUNDLES.
HOW SHALL I CARRY ALL THESE BUNDLES TO THE CITY?
MY ELEPHANTS WILL CARRY THEM FOR YOU.


THE KING ELEPHANT LIFTED A BUNDLE WITH HIS TRUNK...


...AND PLACED IT ON THE BACK OF AN ELEPHANT.

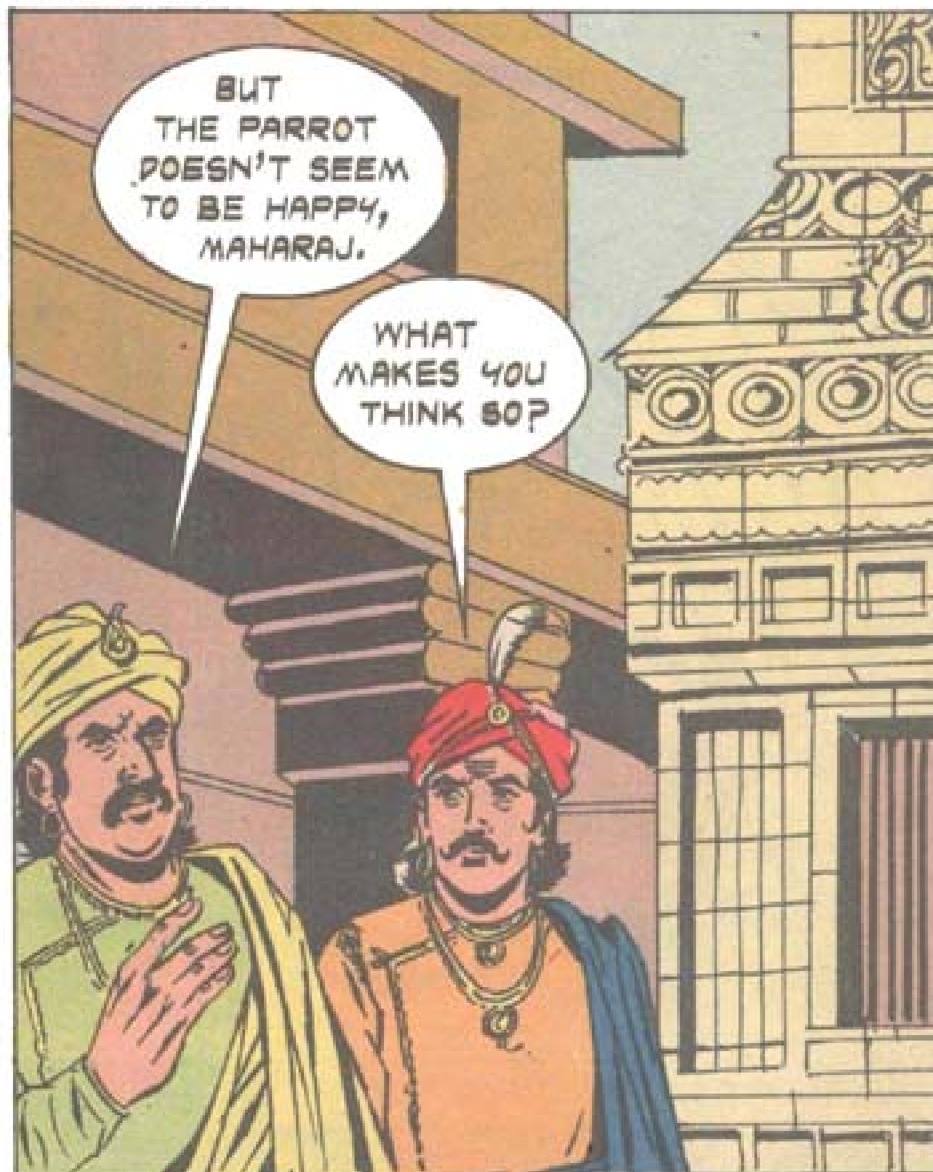

THUS TIMMA LEFT THE FOREST AT THE HEAD OF A CARAVAN OF ELEPHANTS LOADED WITH IVORY.

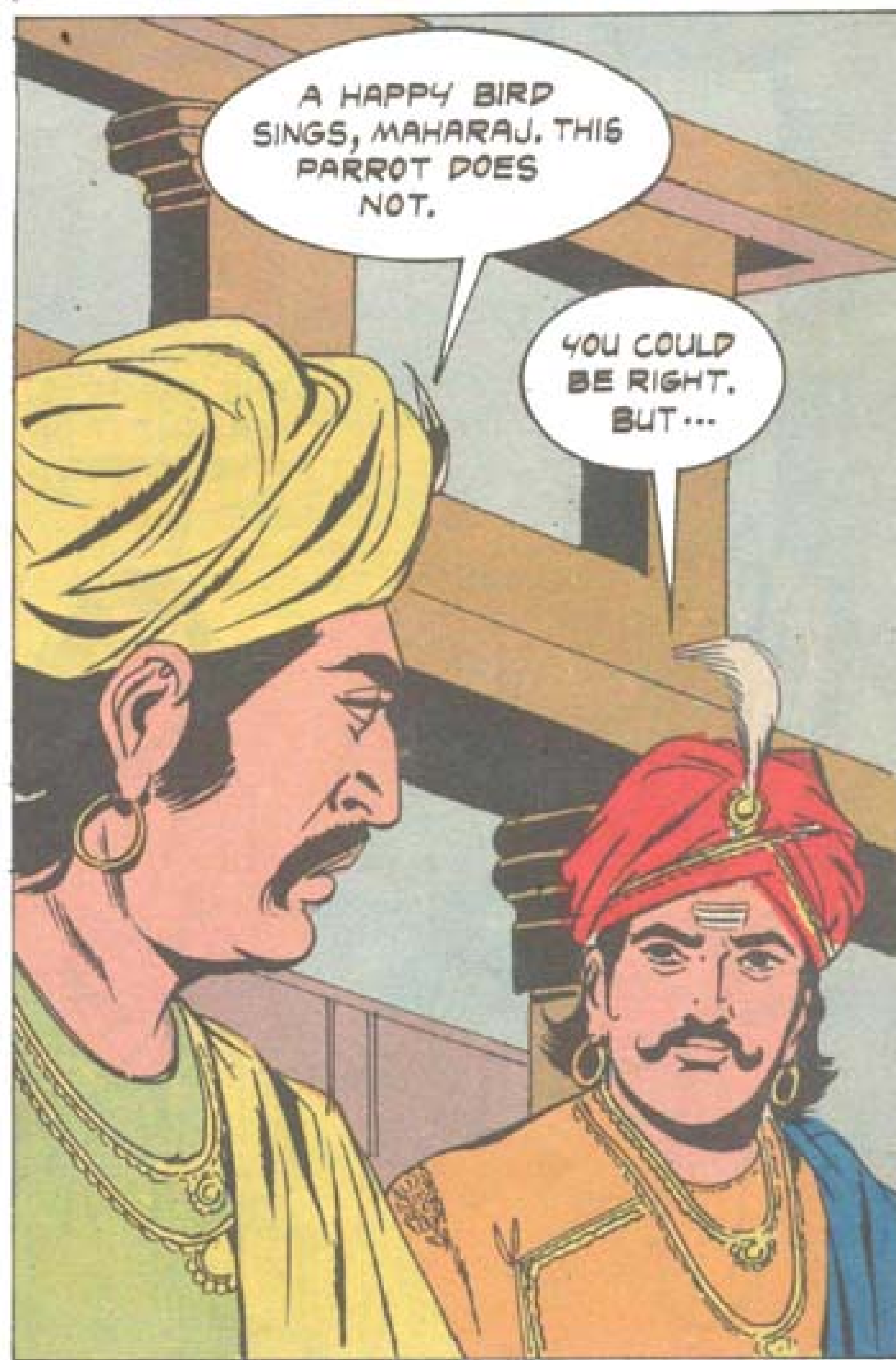

WHEN HE REACHED THE PALACE, THE KING HIMSELF CAME OUT TO RECEIVE HIM.
WELCOME, MY FRIEND.
THIS MAN HAS ACHIEVED THE IMPOSSIBLE.


I APPOINT YOU THE CHIEF OF MY MAHUTS.
OH NO!

MEANWHILE THE KING HAD A TOWER OF IVORY BUILT.

I MUST THANK YOU FOR SUGGESTING THIS IDEA.





THE PARROT MUST BE MISSING ITS OLD MASTER.
BUT HOW ARE WE TO TRACE ITS OLD MASTER?
OUR TIMMA SHOULD KNOW, MAHARAJ.
THE MINISTER SENT FOR TIMMA.
THE KING WANTS YOU TO BRING THE OWNER OF OUR PARROT HERE.
I DON'T KNOW WHO THE OWNER IS. I CAUGHT IT IN THE FOREST.
THE KING IS NOT INTERESTED IN EXCUSES. HE WANTS RESULTS.
BUT...
IF YOU DON'T BRING THE OWNER HERE WITHIN FOUR WEEKS, YOUR HEAD WILL BE CUT OFF.

TIMMA WENT TO HIS OLD FRIEND IN THE FOREST.

THE KING HAS ORDERED ME TO FIND THE OWNER OF THE PARROT. CAN YOU HELP ME?

I WILL. FOLLOW ME.

TIMMA FOLLOWED THE BIRD.

IT LED HIM TO A TEMPLE WHERE THERE STOOD A MECHANICAL HORSE.

MOUNT THIS HORSE AND FLY WESTWARDS. WHEN YOU FLY OVER THE SEA YOU WILL COME ACROSS AN ISLAND...'

THEN THE BIRD TOLD HIM WHAT TO DO.

TIMMA MOUNTED THE HORSE AND TURNED THE KEY.

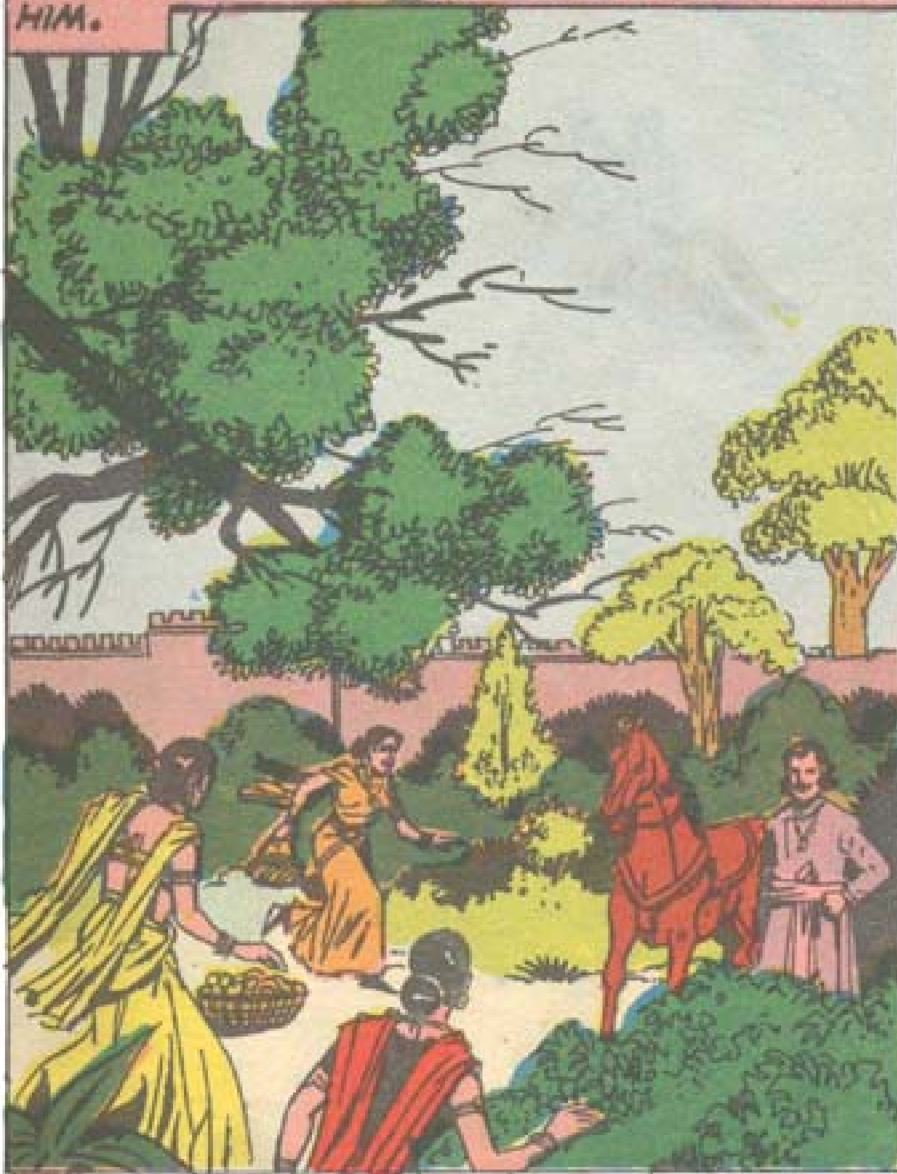
THE NEXT MOMENT HE WAS UP IN THE AIR.

GOOD LUCK, MY FRIEND.


THE HORSE FLEW OVER FOREST...


...AND SEA. AT LAST —
THE ISLAND!


AS HE FLEW OVER THE ISLAND —
LOOK! A FLYING HORSE!
THE PRINCESS WOULD LOVE TO SEE IT.


TIMMA LANDED IN THE ROYAL GARDEN. THE FRIENDS OF THE PRINCESS RAN TOWARDS HIM.


WE HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A HORSE BEFORE.


WE WOULD LIKE TO FLY TOO.
YOU ARE WELCOME.


A FEW GIRLS FLEW ON THE HORSE.
IT'S MARVELLOUS!





...AND FLEW HOMEWARDS.

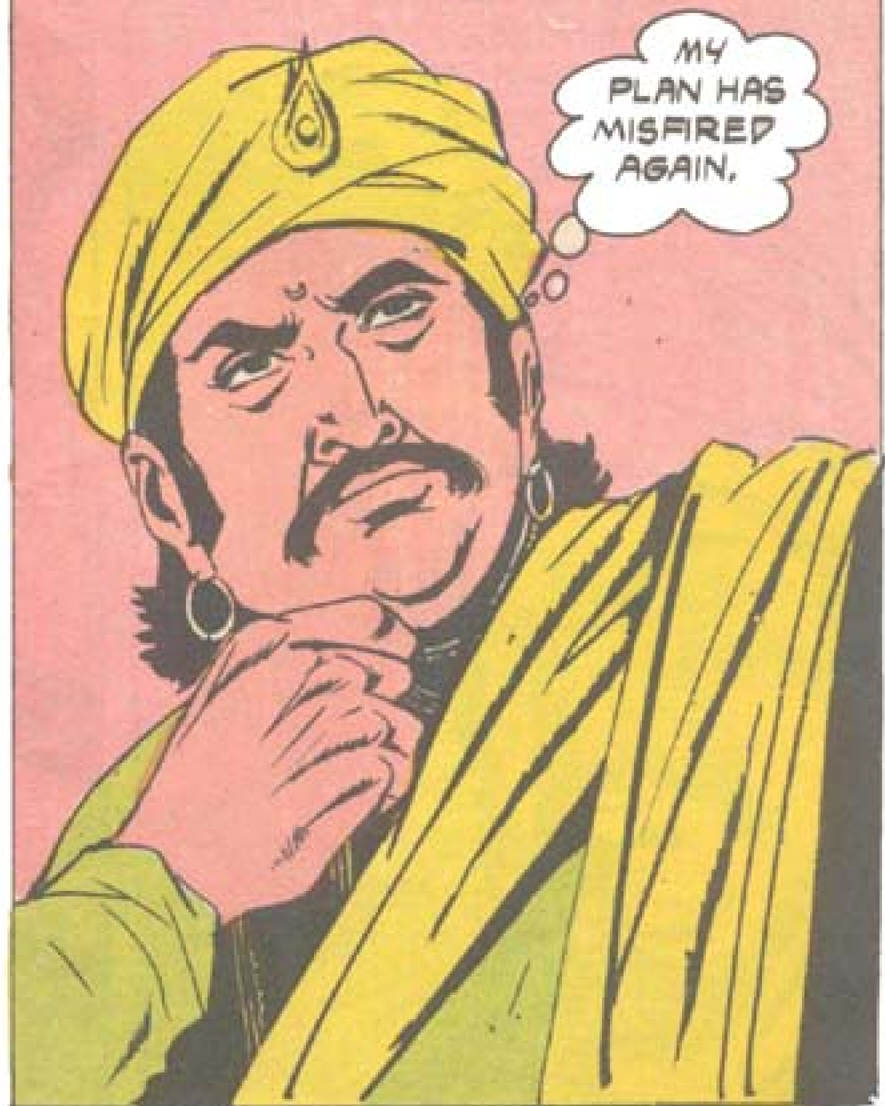
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME, YOUNG MAN?

TO SOMEONE YOU'D LOVE TO MEET.

AS THEY NEARED THE TOWER OF IVORY, THE PARROT BEGAN TO SING.

IT'S MY PARROT!





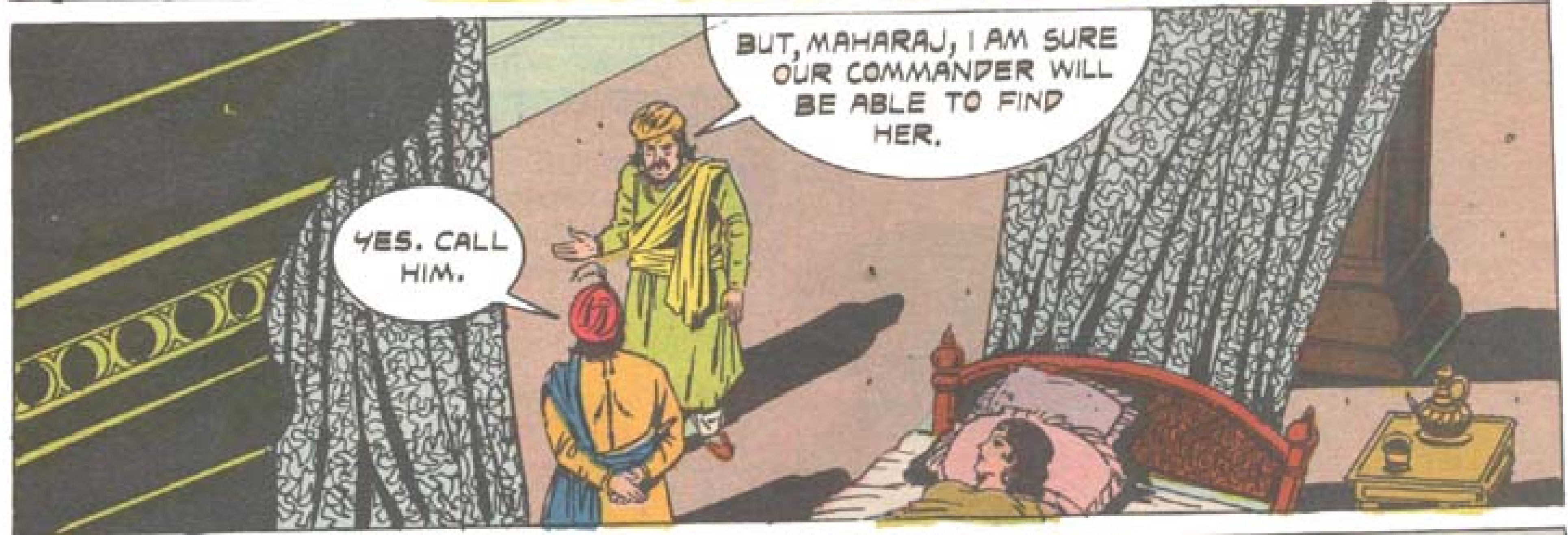

A FEW WEEKS LATER, THE PRINCESS FELL ILL. NO PHYSICIAN COULD CURE HER.
I'M SORRY, MAHARAJ. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.
THERE MUST BE SOMEONE WHO CAN CURE HER.


YOU MUST SEND FOR A PHYSICIAN FROM THE LAND OF OUR QUEEN, MAHARAJ.
I AGREE, MAHARAJ. WE COULD SEND OUR COMMANDER TO THE ISLAND.


I'M SURE THE PEOPLE OF THE ISLAND WILL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE MAN WHO KIDNAPPED THEIR PRINCESS. TIMMA WON'T RETURN ALIVE.


THEN THE QUEEN SPOKE.
THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON WHO KNOWS THE REMEDY AND YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND HER.

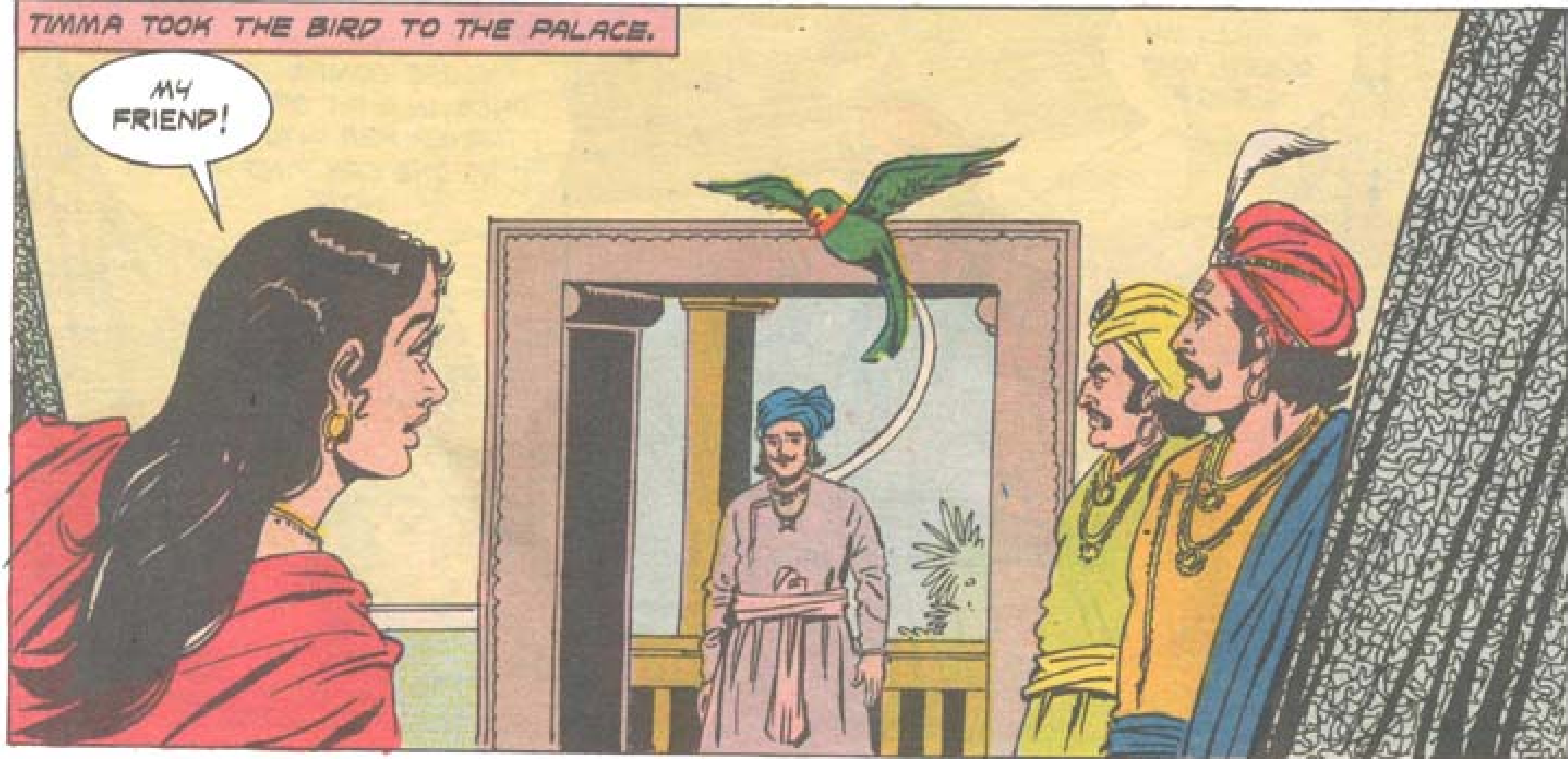

WE WILL, MY QUEEN. WHO IS SHE?
SHE WAS MY CLOSE COMPANION. ONCE, IN A FIT OF TEMPER, I TURNED HER INTO A PARROT. NO ONE CAN FIND HER NOW.


BUT, MAHARAJ, I AM SURE OUR COMMANDER WILL BE ABLE TO FIND HER.
YES. CALL HIM.


THUS TIMMA FOUND HIMSELF IN THE FOREST ONCE AGAIN.
YOU LOOK WORRIED, MY FRIEND. IS IT ANOTHER PROBLEM?
EVEN YOU CANNOT HELP ME THIS TIME.


WHEN TIMMA TOLD THE BIRD ALL ABOUT THE QUEEN'S AILMENT —
TAKE ME TO YOUR QUEEN AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME.

TIMMA TOOK THE BIRD TO THE PALACE.



THE MOMENT THE QUEEN TOUCHED THE BIRD...

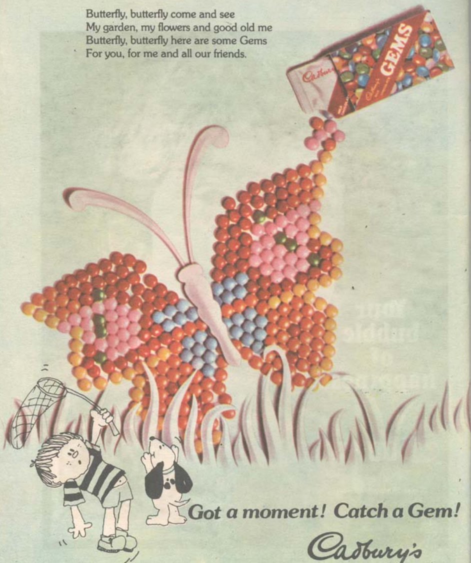


...IT TURNED INTO A BEAUTIFUL GIRL.



THE QUEEN WAS CURED; HER LONG-LOST COMPANION MARRIED TIMMA WHOM THE KING APPOINTED AS HIS MINISTER, AND THE ENVIOUS MINISTER LEFT THE CITY FOR EVER.





Anything's possible with Cadbury's Gems!

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